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Report of the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights*

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 18/18, in which the Council invited the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights to present a comprehensive report on the Board's work on an annual basis, starting from the twentieth session of the Council. Pursuant to Council resolution 33/28, the present report is submitted to the Council at its thirty-seventh session, in March 2018, instead of at its June session, as originally requested by the Council in resolution 18/18. It provides an update on the work of the Board of Trustees of the Fund since the previous report of the Chair of the Board (A/HRC/34/74).

* The annexes to the present report are circulated as received.

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I. Introduction

A. Background

1. The United Nations Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights, established by the Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 1987/38, receives voluntary contributions from Governments, organizations and individuals. The objective of the Fund is to provide financial support for technical cooperation aimed at building and strengthening national and regional institutions, legal frameworks and infrastructures that will have a positive long-term impact on the implementation of international human rights standards.

2. The Board of Trustees has been operational since 1993 and its members are appointed by the Secretary-General for a three-year renewable term. The mandate of the Board is to assist the Secretary-General in streamlining and rationalizing the working methods and procedures of the technical cooperation programme. It meets twice a year and reports on its work to the Secretary-General and the Human Rights Council. Its current members are Mariclaire Acosta Urquidi (Mexico), Morten Kjaerum (Denmark), Lin Lim (Malaysia), Esi Sutherland-Addy (Ghana) and Valeriya Lutkovska (Ukraine). Mr. Kjaerum and Ms. Lutkovska were nominated by the Secretary-General to replace the seats vacated in 2017 by Ilze Brands Kehris (Latvia) and Christopher Sidoti (Australia), respectively. At its forty-fourth session, the Board elected Mariclaire Acosta Urquidi as Chair from 30 June 2017 to 30 June 2018.

B. Mandate

3. The refocused approach, agreed upon by the Board of Trustees and presented in 2011 to Member States in the annual report of the Secretary-General to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/16/66) continues to be appreciated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and its partners. During the period under review, the Board continued to provide advice on policy and strategic orientation of the technical cooperation components of OHCHR. The capacity of the Board to provide strategic advice in the area of technical cooperation has substantially increased and strengthened through its visits to field presences and discussions with all partners on the ground. Over the last five years the Board has visited at least one field presence in every region of the world.

4. As members also of the Board of Trustees of the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the Implementation of the Universal Periodic Review, the Board continued to provide OHCHR with policy guidance in order to maximize the effectiveness of technical assistance and financial support for States in implementing recommendations of the universal periodic review and other international mechanisms at the State level. The Board discussed such strategic guidance at its seventh regular session in Geneva in March 2017 and at its 8th field meeting in Beirut in October 2017. Those discussions focused on strengthening the support of the Fund for national mechanisms for reporting and follow up; comprehensive national human rights action plans and recommendations for implementing such plans (linked to the Universal Human Rights Index, which provides easy access to country-specific human rights information emanating from international human rights mechanisms in the United Nations system, including the treaty bodies, the special procedures and the universal periodic review); integration of the outcomes of the universal periodic review into United Nations planning documents at the national level (United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and other country-level plans); and key thematic human rights issues identified in recommendations. In that regard, the Board has also encouraged OHCHR to develop simplified and streamlined internal guidelines on how to use the Fund, which can serve as a key tool for OHCHR field presences to provide more effective follow-up support to States.

5. Following the advice of the Board within its mandate, the Office continues to strengthen the strategic use of the resources under the two voluntary funds to maximize their impact, especially in the areas of capacity-building and advisory services on the ground. The efforts of the Office to enhance the complementarities of the voluntary funds in support of fuller and more effective integration of accepted recommendations as an integral part of United Nations programme tools on the ground are very much encouraged by the Board and welcomed by all Resident Coordinators with whom the Board has met during its visits to the field. The Board has observed how United Nations presences in country are increasingly engaged through collaborative arrangements in supporting State efforts to follow up on recommendations from the international human rights mechanisms. The Board is of the view that the technical support provided over the last five years in establishing e-tools for systematizing the recommendations and follow-up actions are crucial to ensuring coherent and effective in-country support for implementation of those recommendations. The tools are also proving useful for incorporating the recommendations when developing common country assessments and subsequent United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks.

6. Throughout 2017, the Board had a number of opportunities to engage with the Office and its partners on the relevance of the technical cooperation programmes in the context of the preparations of the new programming cycle for the period 2018–2021. During its two annual sessions, both in Geneva and in the places where the Office has a presence, OHCHR regional consultations and through written submissions, the members of the Board have contributed to the development of the next four-year programme for OHCHR. The Board shared with the Office the lessons learned and experiences gathered over the last four years on the situation on the ground and its findings on the relevance of the technical cooperation programmes, the efficiency and effectiveness of programme delivery and the impact and sustainability of the results achieved. The Board understands that the inputs it provided through this process have been received as an invaluable contribution to better understanding the type of technical cooperation OHCHR is best placed to offer. From the information shared throughout this programming process the Board has also been able to observe how its contributions have been taken into account. In line with its mandate, in which the Board is requested to promote and solicit contributions and pledges to the voluntary funds, a number of outreach events have been organized jointly during the period under review by the OHCHR External Outreach Service and the Board to share experiences and views from the Board on the programmes of the Office on the ground, including sharing good practices and lessons learned in the area of technical cooperation. The Board received positive feedback following the organization of those events, which are facilitating better knowledge of the partnerships between the Office and States and the results therefrom.

7. In its resolution 36/28, the Human Rights Council noted with appreciation the contribution of the Board, in particular to the components of good technical cooperation programmes. The Board very much welcomes this acknowledgement and the discussions with the Board during the sessions of the Human Rights Council, which continue to advance a wider understanding of the results achieved, with the support of the Office, in partnerships with State institutions and civil society on the ground. In the resolution, the Chair of the Board was invited to present the annual report on the work of the Board to the Council at its thirty-seventh session in March 2018, rather than at its June session, as originally requested by the Council in its resolution 18/18. That change, piloted in 2016 and now confirmed for the coming years, facilitates enhanced coordination of the sessions of the Board with those of the Council and the alignment of the annual report of the Board with the fiscal year, so as to provide the most up-to-date information.

II. Activities of the Voluntary Fund and the Board of Trustees

8. The Board of Trustees of the Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights held its forty-fourth session in Geneva from 21 to 24 March 2017 and its forty-fifth session in the regional office for the Middle East and North Africa in Beirut from 24 to 27 October 2017, with a smaller number of members visiting the OHCHR Office in

the occupied Palestinian territory from 29 to 31 October 2017. The sessions were chaired by Mariclaire Acosta Urquidi.

A. Forty-fourth session (Geneva)

9. The Board took the opportunity of its meeting in Geneva, coinciding with the thirty-fourth session of the Human Rights Council, to receive an update and follow up on the various discussions regarding the item on technical cooperation in the Human Rights Council. It also used the session to contribute to the preparation of the new OHCHR programming cycle for the period 2018–2021 through briefings and sharing a series of lessons learned that could help strengthen and focus the programmes of the Office on the ground. The Board held discussions with relevant sections of the Office on the importance of continuing to strengthen thematic capacities at the regional level and the complementarities of the various ongoing efforts and programmes. Discussions were also held on supporting enhanced capacities on the ground for reporting and follow-up to the work of the international human rights mechanisms, in particular the international human rights treaty monitoring bodies. Consistent with its regular methods of work, the Board dedicated one day of the session to taking stock on the implementation of the programmes supported by the Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation; developing its future programme of work; and discussing its responsibilities under the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the Implementation of the Universal Periodic Review. During the meeting, Mariclaire Acosta Urquidi formally assumed her role as elected Chair, to succeed Christopher Sidoti.

10. Representatives of OHCHR services in charge of overall planning and programming guidance, briefed the Board on the process of designing the new strategic direction of the Office for the period 2018–2021. The Board noted with appreciation the efforts by the Office to reach out to and involve a large range and number of stakeholders through the preparatory process, gathering the widest possible views and contributions to analyse lessons learned from the past while scanning the future, the trends and developments requiring particular focus and attention by the Office.

11. The Board had the opportunity to provide the Office with views regarding the challenges ahead based on the individual human rights expertise of its members and the views expressed by stakeholders during its sessions in the field. In particular the Board stressed the ongoing worldwide challenges threatening the human rights gains of the last 70 years and the urgent need to strengthen the worldwide constituency for the promotion and protection of human rights for all. The difficulties being faced by civil society organizations and, in particular, the closing of the civic space in numerous countries and the attacks on human rights defenders, as well as the human rights challenges being faced by people on the move around the world, were some of the elements the Board stressed as requiring particular attention by OHCHR. The combat against racism and xenophobia; the access to and enjoyment of development and the fight against inequality; the situations of conflict and insecurity and the need to strengthen the mechanisms for early warning; and the importance of the prevalence of the rule of law and accountability remain in the view of the Board critical areas of work for the Office in the years to come. Through its visits on the ground, the Board has had the opportunity to observe the added value that the Office has brought to all those fields and its comparative and collaborative advantages. The Board is of the view that when the Office is provided with the right resources and access, the support provided to State efforts in the field of human rights makes a real difference to the daily lives of millions of people around the world.

12. One of the items of interest for the Board over the last four years has been the experiences and lessons learned in the area of providing support through technical cooperation for the establishment of robust national protection systems, including through national human rights institutions. For example, the Board noted the results achieved through the efforts of the Office to support and promote the establishment of national human rights institutions and recommended that the Office continue to give priority in the new programming cycle to strengthening the operational capacities of those institutions, to ensure that they operate in line with the principles relating to the status of national

institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (Paris Principles) and to respond adequately to the protection components of their mandates.

13. The support of OHCHR on the ground through technical cooperation for the engagement and follow-up of the work of the international human rights mechanisms, including the treaty bodies, special procedures and the universal periodic review, was also an area of focus during the session. The Board noted the positive impact of the placement of additional Human Rights Officers under the treaty body capacity-building programme, in 10 OHCHR regional offices to support States, upon their request, in fulfilling their treaty reporting obligations pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/268. That dedicated capacity has enhanced the overall capacity on the ground of OHCHR to follow up and sustain the necessary support to States in their engagement with the United Nations human rights mechanisms and in implementing recommendations deriving from them. Technical assistance provided by the Office through this additional support has resulted in new ratifications of treaties; the submission of outstanding State party reports and updated common core documents; improved and more constructive dialogues before treaty bodies; and an increased interest in a number of countries towards institutionalizing their current interministerial coordination committees on engaging with the United Nations human rights mechanisms into a national mechanism for reporting and follow-up. The Board welcomed the OHCHR practical guide to effective engagement with such mechanisms, published in 2016, and the recently published OHCHR training guide to reporting to the United Nations treaty bodies.

14. The Board was briefed by the secretariat on the status of implementation of the workplan and cost plan for the Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation and reviewed in detail the programmes covered by the Voluntary Fund. It endorsed the status of implementation and the workplan for 2017.

B. Forty-fifth session (Middle East and North Africa Region)

15. In accordance with its practice of holding one of its two meetings each year in a State where OHCHR has a field presence, the Board held its forty-fifth session in Lebanon. The main purpose of the visit, as in the case of previous visits to the field, was to gather in situ observations of the role and added value of OHCHR, this time through a regional presence, to increase its understanding of the type of technical cooperation that OHCHR provides and to give relevant guidance. The Board took the opportunity of the visit to the region to also visit the OHCHR office in the occupied Palestinian territory, one of the presences the Voluntary Fund had been supporting over the last several years.

16. Holding the session in Beirut, the first in the Middle East and North Africa region, provided an excellent opportunity to observe first-hand the type of technical cooperation that OHCHR is best placed to offer in the region, starting with and based upon its monitoring role. The Board discussed with members of the OHCHR team and local partners how the physical presence of the Office and its technical expertise and capacity was used to gather evidence-based information and credible, validated data on the human rights situation and its challenges, and subsequently design, together with the relevant partners, appropriate responses and programmes. The Board found the timing of the session very relevant, as the Office was moving ahead with its new programming cycle.

17. In Beirut, the Board held discussions with staff members of the regional office and with various national authorities in Lebanon, including the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Human Rights Committee of the Parliament, and with United Nations partners and civil society organizations. The Board visited the Restart Centre for the rehabilitation of victims of violence and torture in Beirut, which has been a recipient of financial support from the Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, and discussed the various types of cooperation in which the organization is involved, in addition to the financial support from OHCHR. It also visited the Arab NGO Network for Development and met with representatives of the United Nations and a wide range of civil society organizations working regionally on human rights and development matters. The discussions focused on the OHCHR programme in the region, its relevance and its impact.

18. Its physical presence in the region, despite its limited resources, has enabled OHCHR to enhance the value of its unique mandate and to engage actively with key partners in particular, but not exclusively, in the host country. The added value is particularly evident, for example, in the support the Office has been providing in the host country and others in the region on the development of the statutory framework for the establishment of a national human rights institution, commenting on legislation and supporting through technical cooperation the strengthening of complaints and investigative mechanisms. The Board had the opportunity to discuss with the relevant members of the parliament the support provided in this process, which was reported as extremely valuable. Examples of ongoing technical advice on the development of legislation were provided, including steps to follow up on the ratification by Lebanon of the Convention against Torture, and of its Optional Protocol, the establishment of the national preventive mechanism and the fight against domestic violence. The Board also appreciated the results achieved through the treaty body capacity-building programme, which has helped to consolidate and give an important support to the efforts by the host country and several other countries in the region to meet pending reporting obligations. The situation of the most recent reception of a large number of refugees, in particular from the Syrian Arab Republic, and the challenges the country faces, given its generosity to refugees, was also a key focus of discussions during the meetings with authorities, the United Nations and civil society organizations. During meetings with staff of the regional office, the Board also learned about the current technical assistance programme with Saudi Arabia.

19. The regional office is one of the OHCHR offices that is supported by a Regional Gender Adviser. The Board always pays particular attention to the efforts made on gender integration and women's rights through technical cooperation by the Office. It was pleased to note that the presence of the Adviser has substantially increased the capacity and work of the regional office in gender and women's rights issues in the region and in accordance with the mandate and vision of OHCHR. The Board emphasized how critical that type of expertise is to working with partners and building new partnerships within the United Nations country teams and the United Nations regional entities to support efforts aimed at advancing women's rights. The Adviser liaises with partners at the national level, including national human rights institutions, women's mechanisms and civil society actors. The Board learnt about the ongoing capacity-building programmes to enhance women's rights, national mechanisms and institutions in the Middle East and North Africa region. The Board also discussed how the progressive normative guidance by human rights mechanisms in the area of women's rights, in particular from the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the work of the Adviser, are advancing women's rights in the region, including facilitating sessions on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, and examining the efforts of countries to combat violence against women, advancing the agenda of resolution 1325 (2000). The Board was particularly pleased with the ongoing training programmes on community mobilization for women human rights defenders from across the region; the human rights capacity-building activities for judges and lawyers, in particular on issues such as judicial gender stereotyping and women's access to justice; and the support provided to countries in the region to be up to date with the reporting obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The overall impression gained by the Board is that the work on gender mainstreaming has moved its focus from the quantity of activities undertaken to the quality of the support and cooperation provided.

20. In response to the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic, OHCHR has established a team, which functions as a virtual country office, given the present lack of access, and operates from Gaziantep, Turkey, Amman, Geneva and Beirut. The Beirut component, co-located with the OHCHR regional office, provided the Board with a briefing during the visit and they had the opportunity to discuss various aspects of the programme. The work of OHCHR on the Syrian Arab Republic involves monitoring and reporting, providing human rights and legal advice to partners and capacity-building and advocacy. The Beirut-based team monitors, analyses and reports on the human rights situation in the Syrian Arab Republic through contributions to the monthly reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council pursuant to Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015), and also produces monthly early-warning reports. The Board

observed how the work of the monitoring team for the Syrian Arab Republic continues to be a key source for OHCHR data collection, early warning and advocacy and also for capacity-building activities with partners on a number of specific thematic issues, including human rights documentation methodology, sexual and gender-based violence, transitional justice, future legal reform and general strengthening of the human rights expertise of Syrian human rights civil society. The Board was very impressed by the commitment and work of the team in the challenging circumstances of not having access to the country and undertaking remote monitoring. For the Board, the output of the team provides another important example of the quality work that OHCHR delivers and how it is being used to guide the process of many other key actors. For the Board, that is the type of technical cooperation the Office is best placed to provide.

21. The Board met with the Resident Coordinator in Lebanon and with many representatives of the United Nations in the region, which is one of the largest and most diverse United Nations presences in the world in terms of the number of agencies and programmes. The Board always takes such opportunities with the relevant agencies and programmes to gather information on synergies and cooperation on the ground supporting national efforts in any critical area with relevance for the promotion and protection of all economic, civil, cultural, political and social rights. Several United Nations agencies and programmes, as has been the case in other regions, stressed how useful they found the information provided by the Office and its advice concerning international human rights standards, which offer key guidance to their programmes to support the efforts of States to fulfil their international human rights obligations. The Board was particularly interested in the ongoing work and plans in the context of the agenda on prevention; on support for the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals; and on the promotion of gender equality and women's rights. The impact of the conflicts in the region, and the question of inequalities and the implications for the achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals made clear the important role of OHCHR and the expectations regarding the provision of substantive guidance and advisory services.

22. The Board was informed by various partners on the ground that the OHCHR regional office is seen as the expert point of reference. The Board hopes that strengthening the OHCHR regional presence will result in an increase in thematic capacity, particularly at this critical juncture, when peace and security, violent extremism and the need to strengthen the rule of law and to eliminate inequalities play such a critical role in the stability and prosperity in the region and beyond. The Middle East and North Africa Region is one of the regions not benefiting from the presence of human rights advisers in the United Nations setting. In all the other regions the Board has visited, human rights advisers have proved very useful in supporting United Nations efforts to mainstream human rights across the programmes on the ground and support States with their human rights commitments, pledges and obligations, in particular where OHCHR does not have a fully-fledged presence.

23. During the visit to the regional office and in discussions with partners, the Board was able to observe in practice the complementarities and relevance of its mandate relating to both the Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation and the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the Implementation of the Universal Periodic Review. There are clear expectations that OHCHR will continue to provide sound advice on the engagement with and follow-up to the outcomes from the universal periodic review, not only from national partners across the region but also from the United Nations. The importance of enhancing the linkages between these outcomes, recommendations and reviews and the efforts on the ground to combat inequality and discrimination were particularly stressed. Throughout the region, inequality requires effective responses in terms of economic and social human rights, as noted in several of the meetings the Board held. However the effects of exclusion and mistrust will clearly continue having a negative impact on the progress towards peace and on durable solutions for the millions of refugees and displaced persons across the region.

24. In the view of the Board, the next programming cycle provides an excellent opportunity to expand the work of the Office in the region, strengthening its staff capacity on the ground and expanding its presence at the national level. The Board would like to

encourage Member States to boost their dialogue with the Office, with the aim of expanding its presence and capacity for support across the region.

25. In the occupied Palestinian territory, the support received and the value of the work of the Office was emphasized by all counterparts, including the authorities, civil society and members of the United Nations and the international community with whom the Board met. The visit to the OHCHR office in the occupied Palestinian territory once again demonstrated that, when it is given the opportunity to use the full mandate of the High Commissioner in a strategic manner to support human rights efforts in a country, the results are tangible and sustainable, and the Office is accepted as a key, reliable partner, despite critical complexities.

26. In Ramallah, the Board delegation met with staff of the OHCHR office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Independent Commission for Human Rights, civil society organizations, United Nations programmes and agencies and representatives of the international community supporting development programmes on the ground. The Board members also visited Gaza, where they met with staff of the OHCHR office, civil society and United Nations agencies and programmes.

27. The Board was particularly impressed by the work of OHCHR in such a complex political context and by its strategic direction, despite the critical operational challenges on the ground. The discussions with all partners highlighted how closely the Office works with all of them and how the monitoring reports inform all the programmes and contribute positively to the very tangible results achieved in the development of the national protection framework, engagement with the human rights mechanisms and legal and policy reforms promoting human rights. For example, the close monitoring of the situation of human rights defenders and of persons in detention has enabled the Office to get an accurate idea of the key challenges that need to be addressed and of the relevant institutions to work with on the design and implementation of appropriate programmes.

28. The Office has managed very effectively to maintain its operations and to further develop the programmes while holding always to the highest standards of independence and in full respect of the mandate of the High Commissioner. The Board observed, as was also the case in Ukraine, how skilfully the staff of the Office handle the challenges they face, ensuring respect for international standards as the key basis for all its programmes. The cooperation, trust and credibility that the Office has managed to build over the more than 20 years it has been present, through numerous crisis situations and difficult times is, in the view of the Board, the result of a consistent programme in full conformity with international standards and of a constructive and proactive engagement with the rights of the people at the centre of all the strategies. As has been observed in the case of previous visits of the Board, such as its most recent visit to the OHCHR office in Guatemala, in the occupied Palestinian territory, the Office plays an important convening role and provides a trusted space for dialogue, by also creating channels of participation, in particular for human rights defenders and victims. That was highlighted by human rights defenders with whom the Board met in Gaza.

29. One of the greatest achievements of the Office in the occupied Palestinian territory has been the strategic use of its monitoring mandate to gather valuable and credible data and develop specific technical cooperation programmes aimed at the development of the national protection system. All the actors with whom the Board met stressed the neutrality of the Office as a key component of the trust it has nurtured and which is demonstrated in its recommendations to all sectors. The Board noted that capacity-building activities have increased, especially since the ratification in 2014 by the State of Palestine of seven of the core human rights treaties. It also appreciated the fact that during its visit a number of concrete actions for capacity-building to meet reporting obligations were discussed and finalized. The sequence of activities, involving ratification, legislative development and law reform in line with international standards and policymaking informs the entire programme. For example, the Office has been providing support on the finalization of reports to the Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and its role in ensuring that the situation in Gaza was not overlooked in both reports was highly appreciated by all the parties with whom the Board met. The Board was also impressed

with the work and guiding role of the Office through the United Nations humanitarian protection cluster, which it leads and which is unique among all the presences the Board has visited. The Board felt that such examples could contribute to the methodologies of mainstreaming human rights into humanitarian work in difficult situations and also that the potential of that function could be developed further in many other situations in other regions. The Board was also concerned about the environmental challenges in the region, which have crucial human rights implications, and very much hopes that the entire United Nations team pays attention to them through their cooperation programmes.

30. The Board is struck by the operational challenges that the Office faces and by the challenges that lie ahead, despite the important achievements of recent years. To sustain and build on the progress made so far requires not only support from headquarters but also from the entire United Nations system. The Board shares the concerns expressed by all the actors with whom it met regarding the situation in Gaza, where sustainable progress on human rights is undermined by the Israeli blockade (including restrictions on the movements of United Nations staff members and those of civil society organizations), by the need for reconciliation between Palestinian factions and by the overall worsening humanitarian situation.

III. Technical cooperation

A. Technical cooperation and the priority areas of work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

31. Since 2012, the Board has brought to the attention of the Human Rights Council a number of components for effective technical cooperation by OHCHR that have become evident in its experience of overseeing the management of the Voluntary Fund. The Board has already written in previous reports on the importance of (a) anchoring technical cooperation to the universality and indivisibility of all human rights, including both protection and promotion aspects; (b) building and strengthening national frameworks and institutions in the field of human rights through technical cooperation and advisory services; (c) partnerships with United Nations entities on the ground; (d) technical cooperation programmes ensuring the broadest possible participation of all elements of national societies; (e) effective technical cooperation reflecting national development objectives; and (f) technical cooperation programmes to support the implementation of recommendations by the human rights mechanisms and follow-up thereon.

32. The acknowledgement of the Human Rights Council of the usefulness of the views and guidance provided by the Board through the elaboration of those components is very much welcomed and seen by all Board members as an encouragement to continue elaborating on the components through its annual updates to the Human Rights Council. In the present report, the Board elaborates on its view that, to be effective, technical cooperation in the field of human rights should be anchored in and build on the programmatic priorities and focus of the work of OHCHR through its programmatic cycle, with the aim of optimizing the effective use of all types of resources available.

33. That component of technical cooperation is necessary to ensure the most effective use of the expertise and financial resources available. The level of resources, both of personnel and funding, available for technical cooperation in the field of human rights is woefully inadequate relative to the needs of people and the demands of States. It is imperative, therefore, that the resources that are available are used to best effect. That requires good analysis of needs, good strategizing of objectives and priorities and good coordination of delivery of technical assistance. The OHCHR multi-year strategic programming process is the most comprehensive regular process for identifying human rights strategies and priorities for human rights technical cooperation. It is based on solid data and evidence and is undertaken through a broad consultative process. For those reasons it provides the best platform on which to plan and undertake other forms of technical cooperation for human rights. Through its field sessions, the Board has observed how coordination provides enhanced and more robust results and has been able to obtain

concrete examples in numerous areas, for example regarding efforts to enact or amend legislation in line with international human rights standards; regarding the challenges to civic space and the work of human rights defenders; on the efforts to combat violence against women and in particular gender-based violence, just to mention a few. The Board certainly considers it so in its own planning. It encourages others contributing directly or indirectly to technical cooperation in the field of human rights to take into account the OHCHR programme plans in determining their own strategies, priorities and programmes. The Board also encourages the Office to continue its programme planning through evidence-based analysis and broad consultation to ensure that its programmatic priorities and work match human rights realities. Following its visits to the field and its findings, it also considers that there is a great opportunity to enhance communication of the important results being achieved on the ground, including sharing experiences across regions. The Board has observed over the last five years how the Office has increased its investments in this critical area. The new programing cycle offers an important opportunity to continue strengthening both advice in the area of communications from headquarters and the expert communications capacity in the field presences, in particular in the regional offices.

34. The Board has been closely following, analysing and participating in various ways in the current OHCHR programming process, which will design its future direction for the period 2018–2021. The Board has particularly appreciated the renewed efforts made by the Office to reach out and obtain the maximum possible contributions from the most varied possible constituencies, including States, national, regional and international institutions and bodies, civil society organizations and experts. The members of the Board have provided their views on the achievements made over the last four years; the human rights challenges ahead, the comparative and collaborative advantages of the Office and the critical areas requiring particular attention and investment.

B. Synergy and partnerships with other United Nations entities

35. During its visits to OHCHR field presences during the period under review, the Board continued to pay attention to the synergy and partnerships among United Nations agencies and programmes in the area of technical cooperation in the field of human rights. Through discussions with agencies and programmes present at regional and national levels and Resident Coordinators, the Board has had the opportunity to understand how the United Nations system-wide commitment to human rights has been evolving and how it has been prioritizing support for the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals.

36. The Board is of the view that the third cycle of the universal periodic review, which began in May 2017, has created a new momentum for constructive and cooperative engagement on the implementation of recommendations by human rights mechanisms, including those emanating from the universal periodic review, and in the light of renewed efforts at the national and regional levels to advance the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. As emphasized by the Secretary-General in his reports to the General Assembly (see A/72/1, para. 98, and A/72/351), that engagement is based on increased support to Member States, stronger collaboration with United Nations country teams, better alignment of human rights and development efforts at the national level and the involvement of key stakeholders, such as civil society, national human rights institutions, parliaments, United Nations agencies at the national level, the donor community and regional human rights organizations. In 2017, that focus was strengthened through the activities of the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the Implementation of the Universal Periodic Review. The Fund provided financial and technical assistance for activities in Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Botswana, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Iraq, Lesotho, Paraguay, Republic of Moldova, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago.

37. The Board has been particularly pleased with the recent developments in the Americas Region, where the OHCHR regional office for South America has worked closely with the United Nations country teams in a number of countries in the region through the current programming cycle, enhancing the national capacity on human rights. That was

made possible initially as a combined effort of the OHCHR programme in the region and additional funding from the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the Implementation of the Universal Periodic Review, which resulted in interesting initiatives, such as the establishment of online tools to follow up on international human rights recommendations and national human rights action plans. The increased capacity for human rights activities by United Nations personnel on the ground, combined with the willingness of national partners to receive technical cooperation in this area, has resulted in consistent cooperation between United Nations country teams and national partners, sharing good practices and experiences. In view of the results achieved with the support of United Nations partners, such as the United Nations Development Group and the Development Operations Coordination Office, OHCHR will be able to maintain and strengthen its network capacity in the region. The Board is of the view that there are a number of experiences in that regard that could be replicated and shared in other regions, for example in Asia and the Pacific.

C. Measuring the results of technical cooperation and the response of the Office of the High Commissioner

38. The Board continues to benefit from the reports and information provided and facilitated through the OHCHR performance monitoring system. Through its visits to the field offices it has been able to see how the system is fully used and how it has increased the capacity of the Office to accurately monitor the implementations of all its programmes. The system continues to be a critical tool that provides the Board with the information it requires to undertake its functions in a timely manner. During the period under review the existence of the system has demonstrated how particularly critical it is for the new programming cycle for the period 2018–2021. The upgrades implemented over the past year provide greater opportunities for disaggregating and collecting data and having access across all OHCHR offices to share experiences and good practices. The Board has observed in particular in 2017 how useful the system is for enhancing coordination among all planning entities. That enhanced capacity is key to strengthening cooperation and maximizing and optimizing the use of available resources. While the Board has been able to appreciate some of the important developments brought by the Umoja system, it is still of the view that additional efforts are needed when rolling out the system in the field to ensure the least possible disruption to operations.

D. Main findings, challenges and recommendations

39. The year under review has provided a unique opportunity for the Board to maximize its advice through the programming process of OHCHR for the new programming cycle for the period 2018–2021. The Board has used all possible opportunities to actively engage with the technical cooperation components of OHCHR that are relevant to each of its thematic strategies, give advice on their implementation in the 2014–2017 programming cycle, share its views after having visited numerous presences across the regions and provide insights and suggestions to strengthen future programmes.

40. The Board welcomes the appreciation by the Human Rights Council in 2016 of the usefulness of its contributions and views. It was particularly pleased to observe a number of programmes on the ground where OHCHR was identified as a key reliable partner, despite important financial challenges in providing sustainability, continuity and stability to its programmes. The Board particularly welcomes efforts to cover an important component of the capacity of the Office in the occupied Palestinian territory from the regular budget. As stressed in previous reports, the Board wishes to continue calling on Member States to support OHCHR offices on the ground through adequate funding to ensure that they are properly staffed and that the framework of operations fully represents the mandate of the High Commissioner, which is a recipe for sustainable and tangible results.

41. As indicated in the previous report, the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, with their robust and explicit human rights-based approach, requires a new understanding of what constitutes official

development assistance (ODA). Despite the increase in the Development Assistance Committee coefficient for OHCHR from 64 per cent to 88 per cent in June 2017, the Board remains persuaded that all contributions to OHCHR in their entirety should be treated as 100 per cent ODA in view of the critical importance that all its work has for sustainable development and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

IV. Status of funding and donors

42. At its meetings in Geneva and Beirut, the Board was updated on the overall financial status of OHCHR and the financial status of the Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights respectively. The Board also discussed and analysed the status of implementation of the workplan for the Voluntary Fund for 2017 and endorsed it. An analysis of funding trends between 2008 and 2017 (see annex I) shows the continuing decrease in voluntary contributions to the Fund, particularly in the past three years, which continues to have a negative impact on the capacity to respond positively to current needs and demands on the ground. Throughout its visits on the ground over the last four years, all partners have raised with the Board the need for increased presences and programmes on the ground.

43. In 2017, the total expenditure was $12,362,447, substantially less than in previous years owing to a number of reductions in various programmes. The reductions largely corresponded to the closing of a number of presences and a reduction in the number of programmes. By 31 December 2017, the Fund had received a total of $11,002,141 ($2,843,455 earmarked for the Voluntary Fund, $1,669,033 to be allocated to technical cooperation on specific country projects and $6,489,652 allocated to the Fund as unearmarked funds). The Fund provided resources for technical cooperation programmes designed to build strong human rights frameworks at the national level in 28 regions, countries and territories through 14 human rights advisers/human rights mainstreaming projects (in Chad, Kenya, Madagascar, the Niger, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Philippines, Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, Rwanda, Serbia, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste and the South Caucasus region (Georgia)); 10 human rights components of peace missions (in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Kosovo,[1] Liberia, Libya, Somalia and the Sudan (Darfur)); and 4 country/stand-alone offices in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Mauritania, Mexico and the State of Palestine.

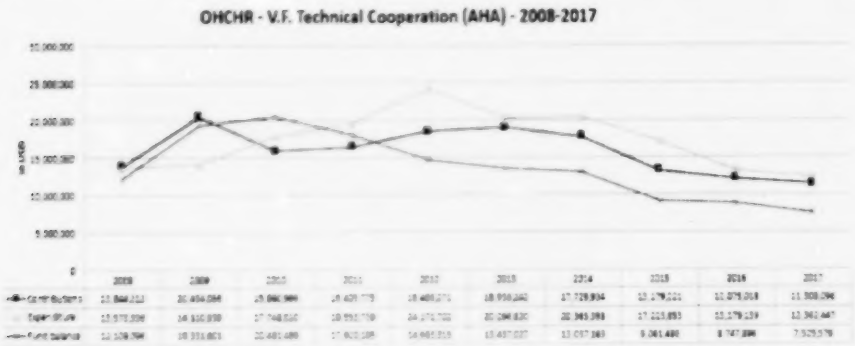
44. Through the Fund, OHCHR has facilitated efforts at the country level to incorporate international human rights standards into national laws, policies and practices, including through follow-up to recommendations made by international human rights mechanisms and the development of online mechanisms to facilitate such follow-up. It has also contributed to the establishment and strengthening of national structures, institutions and capacities to ensure adherence to those standards. Activities to strengthen the administration of justice, including support for increasing access capacities for individuals and groups facing discrimination and exclusion and increasing the capacity to promote gender equality and women's rights and combat inequalities, have also featured prominently in numerous programmes receiving support from the Voluntary Fund. The Board has observed how OHCHR has also strengthened its provision of technical advice, not only for the establishment of national human rights institutions compliant with the Paris Principles, but also for the strengthening of its capacity to respond and act according to such principles in a number of countries. United Nations Resident Coordinators and country teams have continued to see their human rights capacity strengthened by the deployment of human rights advisers and by the development of a number of human rights mainstreaming projects. Detailed information on income and expenditure under the Voluntary Fund, its financial status in 2017 and a list of donors and contributors are annexed to the present report (see annexes II–IV).

[1] All references to Kosovo in the present document should be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

45. The Board continues to emphasize the importance of ensuring increased and sustainable contributions to OHCHR, the Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights and the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the Implementation of the Universal Periodic Review. The Board has been participating in the context of its mandate in a number of fundraising efforts by OHCHR in the regions it has visited and very much hopes that in 2018 the financial capacities of the Office continue to grow, in order to be able to respond to the current challenges around and across all regions.

Annex I

Contributions to the Voluntary Fund and expenditure trends (2008–2017)



Annex II

Voluntary Fund cost plan and expenditure (2017)

Human Rights

OHCHR EXTRABUDGETARY RESOURCES

Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation

Project Number	Field Operations & Technical Cooperation Division	Cost Plans 2017 Staff costs	Activities	Total	Expenditure USD as 31.12.2017
	(a) Human Rights Advisers in UNCT (14) */:				
	- Activities implemented by OHCHR HRAs to the UNCT on:				
SB-002067	- Russian Federation	240,698	458,893	**699,581**	**536,958**
SB-002063	- South Caucasus, Georgia	415,689	217,141	**632,830**	**641,084**
SB-002065	- Moldova	102,038	103,135	**205,173**	**181,139**
SB-002365	- Serbia	258,837	193,219	**452,056**	**402,091**
SB-002059	- Rwanda	308,872	141,826	**450,698**	**336,031**
SB-002063	- Kenya	543,720	227,017	**770,737**	**507,635**
SB-002066	- Niger	41,692	49,057	**90,749**	**87,051**
SB-002069	- Chad	425,666	147,409	**573,075**	**467,650**
SB-002077	- Madagascar	263,325	133,546	**397,371**	**339,781**
SB-002072	- Paraguay	225,218	193,659	**418,877**	**323,694**
SB-002064	- Papua New Guinea	319,254	245,772	**565,026**	**390,922**
SB-007555	- Philippines	247,438	-	**247,438**	**225,044**
SB-002053 7657	- Sri Lanka	184,018	124,314	**308,332**	**361,680**
SB-002099	- Timor Leste	368,135	125,784	**494,919**	**464,828**
	sub-total HR Advisers:	*3,942,660*	*2,364,052*	*6,306,712*	*5,305,588*
	(b) Human Rights Components of UN Peace Missions (10)				
	- Activities implemented by UN Peace Missions' Human Rights Units in:				
SB-007116	- Haiti, MINUSTAH	-	88,479	**88,479**	**51,497**
SB-006015	- Afghanistan, UNAMA	-	359,319	**359,319**	**221,728**
SB-007192	- Côte d'Ivoire, UNOCI	-	31,640	**31,640**	**49,778**
SB-007194	- Liberia, UNMIL	-	73,450	**73,450**	**34,176**
SB-007199	- Somalia, UNSOM	-	177,580	**177,580**	**137,037**
SB-007197	- South Sudan, UNAMID	-	181,964	**181,964**	*(28,791)*
SB-006152	- Guinea Bissau, UNIOGBIS	-	69,495	**69,495**	**54,574**
SB-007195	- Central African Republic, MINUSCA	-	108,177	**108,177**	**80,505**
SB-002073	- Kosovo	29,170	2,882	**32,052**	**27,743**
SB-002092	- Libya	31,956	126,237	**158,193**	**87,348**
	sub-total Peace Missions:	*61,126*	*1,219,223*	*1,280,349*	*715,605*
	(c) Country/Standalone Offices (4)				
SB-002069 6649	- Mauritania	682,223	452,986	**1,135,209**	**788,063**
SB-007565	- Mauritania - Malian Refugees in Hodh Ech-Chargui	26,781	26,063	**52,844**	**52,662**
SB-002062	- State of Palestine	632,057	469,527	**1,101,864**	**884,090**
SB-002103	- East Jerusalem, public information and legal analysis	560,819	31,651	**592,470**	**513,876**
SB-002071	- Bolivia	1,166,784	957,229	**2,124,013**	**1,902,547**
SB-005426	- Mexico Justice system's forensic scientist	89,713	21,018	**110,731**	**62,815**
SB-002059 6645	- Mexico	1,786,784	632,127	**2,418,831**	**2,361,348**
	sub-total Country / Standalone Offices:	*4,945,061*	*2,590,801*	*7,535,862*	*6,565,401*
	Adjustments relates to items negat.				*(24,147)*
	Sub-Total	**8,948,847**	**6,174,076**	**15,122,923**	**12,362,447**
	Total (including 13% PSC)	**15,122,923**			**82%**

** In addition, 5 Human Rights Advisers are envisioned to be deployed from MPTF, UN DG and/or OHCHR posts (i.e. HCA) in Jamaica, Dominican Republic, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Malawi, Mozambique.*

*** Projections/assumptions. Expenditure reported in 2017: $118,596 relates to $14,736 relates to 2016 commitments liquidated in 2017.*

Annex III

Financial status of the Voluntary Fund (2017)

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

[redacted]

Statement of Income and Expenditure (in USD)
Overview for the years 2008 to 2017

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Income										
Voluntary contributions	13,844,212	20,434,058	15,860,568	18,405,775	18,662,271	18,538,242	17,329,534	13,175,221	12,075,018	11,308,096
Miscellaneous/interest income	920,529	900,386	934,223	586,670	482,247	660,052	378,698	98,209	103,606	76,755
Total income	**14,764,741**	**21,334,444**	**16,795,189**	**18,992,445**	**19,144,518**	**19,198,294**	**18,908,232**	**13,273,430**	**12,178,624**	**11,384,851**
Expenditure										
Staff and other personnel costs	7,309,704	8,173,321	9,205,785	10,689,114	13,707,545	12,424,052	12,397,223	11,246,805	7,956,364	7,408,548
Travel[1]	610,250	481,795	780,989	1,073,631	1,094,387	668,163	749,579	427,905	1,263,574	1,449,714
Consultant Services	729,700	5,27,994	673,952	770,747	922,295	521,963	554,368	414,247	792,453	658,783
Operating expenses/Other direct costs	754,616	868,815	1,331,084	1,034,368	1,952,751	1,954,729	1,733,697	1,338,930	1,234,775	1,202,795
Supplies, Materials, Equipment and Vehicles	268,626	550,521	324,423	518,202	556,210	61,121	208,095	304,359	324,874	178,334
Transfer and Grants to Implementing Partners	2,237,708	1,679,794	3,405,880	3,204,854	3,922,089	2,972,109	2,476,803	1,463,892	171,525	178,684
Programme support costs	1,543,534	1,623,329	2,026,947	2,265,253	2,778,416	2,274,514	2,307,173	2,027,781	1,440,304	1,349,539
Total expenditure	**13,573,336**	**14,190,535**	**17,748,020**	**19,553,735**	**24,171,702**	**20,296,670**	**20,305,350**	**17,223,053**	**13,173,125**	**12,362,447**
Excess/(shortfall) of income over expenditure	**1,191,405**	**7,223,505**	**(952,831)**	**(2,561,294)**	**(5,223,184)**	**(1,178,326)**	**(2,256,526)**	**(3,946,423)**	**(1,000,315)**	**(977,596)**
Opening Balance	**9,729,209**	**12,908,096**	**19,331,601**	**20,481,489**	**17,920,195**	**14,683,315**	**13,437,027**	**13,037,183**	**9,061,486**	**8,747,856**
Prior period savings, refunds, write-off	**2,187,482**	**0**	**2,102,719**	**0**	**1,986,304**	**-67,962**	**1,856,682**	**-29,254**	**686,725**	**-244,721**
End of period fund balance	**12,908,096**	**19,331,601**	**20,481,489**	**17,920,195**	**14,683,315**	**13,437,027**	**13,037,183**	**9,061,486**	**8,747,856**	**7,525,579**

[1] Note: for 2016 & 2017 travel expenses also include travel for voluntary personnel reported under travel / expert budget line.

Annex IV

Donors and contributors (2017)

UN Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation (VFTC) Voluntary contributions in 2017					
Donor	Pledge US$	Paid USD$	Gain/loss on exchange	Unpaid pledge US$	Earmarking
Finland	910,125.14	841,176.47	31,081.33	0.00	VFTC
Germany	307,950.79	307,950.79	0.00	0.00	VFTC (allocated to Mexico)
Germany	295,489.86	295,489.86	0.00	0.00	VFTC (allocated to Mexico)
India	100,000.00	100,000.00	0.00	0.00	VFTC
Liechtenstein	39,721.95	40,160.64	438.69	0.00	VFTC
South Africa	10,678.25	10,678.25	0.00	0.00	VFTC
United States of America	1,150,000.00	1,150,000.00	0.00	0.00	VFTC
(a) total contributions earmarked to VFTC	**2,831,965.99**	**2,744,456.96**	**31,450.02**	**0.00**	
Australia	196,414.52	196,414.52	0.00	0.00	HRA in Philippines
France	22,758.18	21,231.42	1,521.71	0.00	Chad
	43,504.29	42,462.85	1,041.41	0.00	Mauritania
Germany	91,498.57	91,498.57	0.00	0.00	Sri Lanka
	204,777.42	204,777.42	0.00	0.00	Combatting Impunity in Mexico
International Organization for Migration	52,800.00	41,800.00	0.00	11,000.00	Mauritania
Mac Arthur Foundation	150,000.00	150,000.00	0.00	0.00	Mexico
Netherlands	115,120.00	115,120.00	0.00	0.00	Kenya
Norway	53,320.83	50,723.48	2,402.66	0.00	DPI
Organisation internationale de la Francophonie	1,971.77	1,005.09	728.27	1,196.95	Madagascar
Saudi Arabia	200,000.00	200,000.00	0.00	0.00	DPI
	240,000.00	240,000.00	0.00	0.00	Mental Health (allocated to Mauritania)
Switzerland	405,370.00	360,000.00	0.00	45,370.00	JPI (Office in East Jerusalem)
United Kingdom	25,000.00	25,000.00	0.00	0.00	Protection and Promotion of HRDs in Georgia
UNDP	248,400.00	0.00	0.00	248,400.00	Kenya
(b) total contributions earmarked to specific projects	**1,976,532.30**	**1,669,033.36**	**1,944.19**	**305,954.35**	
Unearmarked funds pledged to VFTC					
Fiji	4,076,113.80	3,961,571.13	11,542.13	0.00	Unearmarked
Norway	2,971,916.31	2,521,910.97	149,994.18	0.00	Unearmarked
Sweden	2,790,568.35	2,406,179.24	113,481.85	0.00	Unearmarked
United States of America	900,000.00	900,000.00	0.00	0.00	Unearmarked (allocated to Mexico)
(c) total unearmarked funds	**9,736,718.72**	**9,889,652.68**	**252,931.32**	**0.00**	
TOTAL (a) + (b) + (c)	**11,025,616.95**	**11,002,141.75**	**282,479.15**	**305,954.35**	